

MANCHESTER ADDS EPILOGUE ON FIGHT

By Times
Article Relates More Details
of Kennedy Book Dispute

By JOHN CORRY

William Manchester defends his book, tells of his travail and takes issue with Mrs. John F. Kennedy and Senator Robert F. Kennedy in the April 4 issue of Look magazine, which is on sale tomorrow.

Writing about his dispute with the Kennedy family, he says: "No one has the right to distort the past. No fact, however disagreeable, may be expunged from the record."

This, he says, is why he fought the suit filed by Mrs. Kennedy to prevent the publication of "The Death of a President" by Harper & Row and its serialization by Look.

However, even before that, Mr. Manchester says, he was involved with two other books that disturbed Mrs. Kennedy. One was "Kennedy" by Theodore C. Sorensen, the other "A Thousand Days" by Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. Both men had been advisers to President Kennedy and both were writing about his Administration.

Mr. Manchester says he tried to persuade Mr. Sorensen not to change his manuscript simply to please the Kennedys, but that "Ted took the easy way, giving way on point after point and weakening what would have been a great volume."

Says Schlesinger Balked

Mr. Schlesinger, he says, did not give way, which annoyed Mrs. Kennedy. Mr. Manchester says that he subsequently wrote to Mrs. Kennedy, without mentioning Mr. Schlesinger's name, and told her that it was unwise to tamper with history.

He says that Mrs. Kennedy "understood me clearly" and that she wrote to him and said she knew he had been "a comfort to Arthur." Mr. Manchester is certain, he says, that he helped "A Thousand Days" toward publication.

Mr. Manchester had been authorized by the Kennedys on March 26, 1964, to write an account of the assassination of President Kennedy. For the next 26 months, he says, he worked long and hard, and often in anguish.

He began his research in the

offices of the Warren Commission, where he had access to the documents the commission used in its investigation of the assassination.

Later, he says, Chief Justice Earl Warren "rather cannily" asked him to read a first draft of the commission's report and to say, as a friend of the Kennedys, that its findings were acceptable to the family. Mr. Manchester says he felt this would be improper.

Saw Two Advantages

Furthermore, he says, he was not equipped to judge the report then. His own investigation was only beginning, and he

wanted to explore the full sweep of the assassination, not simply the crime.

While he was intimidated by the thought that he might be competing with the commission, he says, he felt that he had two advantages over it.

The first was that he would be working alone. "The single eye sees," he writes, "what the rows of eyes miss." Of the second, he says:

"As I knew then, and as the nation has since discovered, the prestigious names of Earl Warren's panel did little except glitter; the long hours were put in by junior staff men . . . I believe I had more investigative experience than any of them."

Although the Kennedy connections were of little help to his inquiry, Mr. Manchester says, he established a social rapport with both the Senator and Mrs. Kennedy. "After nine months and some gentle teasing" from Mrs. Kennedy, he writes, he began to call her Jackie.

'Continuous Shock'

Mr. Manchester says that he lived in a "state of continuous shock" for two years as he sought to recreate the death of President Kennedy. He speaks of enduring blow after blow, and he writes that "grief is hardest to bear when it cannot be shared."

Mr. Manchester says that during his research he became a "reservoir of intimate confidences" that he was unable to tell anyone except the Kennedys, but that their staffs, particularly Mrs. Kennedy's, discouraged him from seeing them. He says he was forced to deal with intermediaries and that this "Byzantine labyrinth" led to Mrs. Kennedy's suit.

This withdrawal by the Kennedys, their failure to understand what he was doing, Mr. Manchester says, arose from the grief that left them unable to view the assassination rationally. He cites a telegram the Senator sent to the book's editor at Harper & Row asking him to cancel publication and to tell Mr. Manchester about it.

"And indeed," Mr. Manchester says, "it is this sheer insanity that explains the Kennedy behavior throughout the controversy." Mr. Manchester indicates that he feels no bitterness toward the Kennedys.

"The Gallup and Harris polls will swing back and forth, the memory of my disagreement with her will fade, our children will grow tall, and we shall pass, but the unimpeachable fact will remain: in our hour of disgrace and confusion, Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy, who had lost more than any of us, held us all together, remained true to the leader we had lost, and, in kindling that Arlington flame, rekindled our national pride."